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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 002400

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S CARSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - PRESIDENT SHARIF CRITICIZES ASWJ

REF: NAIROBI 2384

Classified By: Political Counselor Bob Patterson, reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Congressman Donald Payne met with President Sharif in Nairobi on November 13. Sharif said he feared an upcoming IGAD conference would force the TFG into closer cooperation with Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), an organization he thought might be positioning itself to challenge the government. Sharif has never before with us expressed such skepticism about ASWJ, and his statements may signify a break, at least with ASWJ's most powerful faction based in the Galgaduud region. The President asked for greater security sector assistance. Our support would determine if others joined in, he said. Sharif highlighted two recent successes on the ground: the naming of a new administration for Mogadishu and the Benadir region, and the re-launch of the government's radio station; Radio Mogadishu. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On November 13 the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Africa Subcommittee Chairman Congressman Donald Payne met with Transitional Federal Government President Sheikh Sharif in Nairobi. President Sharif had stopped briefly in Nairobi before continuing to Addis Ababa.

¶3. (C) President Sharif began by saying that, although Somalia was struggling against long odds, he believe his government could prevail and the country could return to peace. Sharif said security was his number one priority, and that humanitarian access, development, and reconstruction could not begin until Somalia was secure. He reiterated his requests for USG assistance, especially for the security sector, in order to pay and equip Somali soldiers. In addition to salaries, he said the TFG needed transport, and training for officers and non-commissioned officers. President Sharif noted that several hundred troops trained by the Djiboutians and the French were steadily returning to Mogadishu. He also said that some 2,000 men were being trained in Kenya. (Note: Sharif was likely referring to men that Kenya and the TFG reportedly recruited from Kenya's Northeast Province in September and October. End Note.)

¶4. (C) The President said he read the lack of substantial U.S. financial support to the TFG thus far as an indication that "our political perspectives were not yet fully in place and clear." If the United States did not move forward on assistance to the TFG, other countries would not either, he thought.

¶5. (C) President Sharif noted briefly recent successful political initiatives. First, he had installed a new, more

representative administration for Mogadishu and the Benadir region. The new administration had been well received by the citizenry. He also told Congressman Payne that the TFG had re-launched the government's Radio Mogadishu, which could be heard throughout the Mogadishu region.

¶16. (C) President Sharif turned to IGAD's intention to organize a ministerial, reportedly to encourage closer relations between the TFG and ASWJ. (Note: Sharif was likely traveling to Addis Ababa in part to shape or de-rail the summit. End Note). Although the Prime Minister had signed a cooperation agreement with ASWJ in June, Sharif was increasingly concerned about the group, he said. Seemingly lumping ASWJ in with al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam (a connection he later made publicly), Sharif said it was likely that ASWJ would position itself as an opposition group to the TFG, replete with support from "external actors," which we took to be a clear reference to Ethiopia. (Note: Ethiopia is widely reported to be supporting ASWJ militias against Shabaab in the Galgaduud and Gedo regions. However, it appears that ASWJ militia are working without Ethiopian backing in other Somali regions. End Note). ASWJ is now being used "as an instrument to prevent us (the TFG) from moving forward," Sharif said. Ironically, if the IGAD ministerial went forward, IGAD ministers would in effect be taking steps that could ultimately de-stabilize the government, he alleged.

¶17. (C) Sharif glossed over a reported breakdown in talks with Puntland Administration President Farole (reftel). He said there were "minor issues" with Puntland, but insisted

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that the overall relationship was good. The President said the TFG was in "discreet dialogue" with Somaliland.

¶18. (C) Comment: We had long sensed Sharif's hesitancy to cooperate with ASWJ's Galgaduud faction, although in our meetings with him he was generally supportive of the group. However, his statements at this meeting, and his subsequent public statement critical of ASWJ mark a clear shift in Sharif's position. ASWJ's faction leader in Galgaduud on November 17 excoriated Sharif in the media for his assertion that ASWJ was becoming a rebel movement. This public argument might dash hopes that the TFG and ASWJ's strongest faction, based in Galgaduud, might eventually work together.

¶19. (U) CODEL Payne cleared this message.  
RANNEBERGER